A

SERMON

PREACHED IN THE

CHAPEL OF TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN;

ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER THE 7th, 1800.

UPON THE

DEATH

OF THE

RIGHT REVEREND

MATTHEW LORD BISHOP OF CLONFERT.

BY

THE REV. THOMAS ELRINGTON, D. D.

SENIOR FELLOW AND PROFESSOR OF NATURAL PHILOSOPHY, IN TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN.

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TO HIS EXCELLENCY

CHARLES MARQUIS CORNWALLIS,

LORD LIEUTENANT GENERAL AND GENERAL GOVERNOR OF IRELAND,

KNIGHT OF THE MOST NOBLE ORDER OF THE GARTER,

&c. &c. &c.

THIS SERMON,

DESIGNED TO COMMEMORATE

A MAN

WHOSE EMINENT MERIT

HAD BEEN DISTINGUISHED BY

HIS EXCELLENCY'S MUNIFICENT PATRONAGE,

IS INSCRIBED,

WITH THE MOST PROFOUND RESPECT,

BY HIS EXCELLENCY'S DUTIFUL

AND MOST HUMBLE SERVANT,

THOMAS ELRINGTON.

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A SERMON, &c.

I. PET. i. 24.

All the Glory of Man is as the Flower of Graſs. The Graſs withereth and the Flower thereof falleth away.

THOUGH the voice which warns man that he is mortal, is but ſeldom liſtened to with attention:—though the frailty of human life, and the vanity of earthly purſuits, are topics too generally ſlighted as trite and wearifome common-place: yet there are times at which theſe awful ſubjects are attended to with the ſolemn ſeriouſneſs they deſerve. When hum-

bled by the ſtroke of calamity, or awakened by the ſudden fate of ſome lamented friend, we are reſtored to a juſt ſenſe of our real ſtate—the world with all its glory fadeth away from our view, like the flower that falleth and is ſeen no more; and we turn our thoughts to that inheritance Eternal in the Heavens, in the hope of which we find our only comfort.

Light and frivolous muſt we be indeed, were not this, at the preſent moment, the ſtate of our minds. Hardened muſt be the heart, which is not now impreſſed with an humble ſenſe of the frailty of that tenure, by which earthly happineſs and earthly honours are held.—How ſhort a period has elapſed ſince we ſaw, with exultation, the man whom all admired and all loved, raiſed to that rank, in which his talents would become at once more conſpicuous and more uſeful, than they could have been in Academic retirement! And behold, He is gone down to the grave, and ſhall come up no more.—He ſhall return no more

to

to his houſe; neither ſhall his place know him any more.

Even at the moment when we rejoiced at his advancement, the dreadful arrow of death was rankling within him, and pain and bitter torment took poſſeſſion of him.

Where then, O Lord! can be our hope?—Surely in thee alone can we confide. To Thee, in the time of our wealth, as in the hour of death, ſhould we pray, that thou mayeſt deliver us.

Too apt to limit our views to this tranſitory ſtate of exiſtence,—too deſirous of ſeeking here thoſe rewards of virtue which can be found only in another and a better world; impatient of the misfortunes by which we are tried and purified,—the providential government of God requires that we ſhould often and loudly be warned of our error; often admoniſhed, that here we are only ſtrangers: and that neither wealth, nor honours,

nor length of life, nor health, nor any earthly proſperity muſt engage our affections, or become the ultimate object of our deſires. Hence are ſuch advantages ſo often denied to thoſe who, to our erring judgment, appear moſt deſerving to be bleſſed with them as a reward of their virtues.—Hence often, when beſtowed, are they ſuddenly ſnatched away, and in their ſtead the chaſtening hand of the Lord is manifeſted:—grievous indeed for the preſent time, but yielding to thoſe that are exerciſed thereby the peaceable fruits of righteouſneſs.

To contemplations on thoſe awful diſpenſations of God, let us devote the preſent moment.—To us a ſolemn warning ſeems moſt immediately addreſſed.—The voice of admonition calls to us from the grave, that man hath but a ſhort time to live, and is full of miſery.

The ſhortneſs of human life; the uncertainty of that reliance which too many are apt

apt to place on health and ſtrength and youth; are topics one would ſcarcely think it neceſſary to dwell upon, did not experience ſhew us how little diſpoſed men are to take warning from any thing but what happens immediately to themſelves; how readily they admit the truth of reaſoning, without even intending to profit by their own conviction. That mortality is the lot of all men we heſitate not to allow; yet how few are found to act as if they thought they were mortal themſelves! We are taught, that they who weep ſhould be as though they wept not; they who rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; they who buy as though they poſſeſſed not; for that the faſhion of this world paſſeth away. To all this we yield an eaſy aſſent, but how ill do our actions correſpond with our words! How little reſemblance can be traced between our profeſſions and our conduct! The folly of others in not liſtening to thoſe precepts, we are quick in diſcerning: but when the application ought to be made to ourſelves, then does

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our heart wax groſs, and our ears become dull of hearing; then do we cloſe our eyes, leſt we ſhould ſee and underſtand and be converted from the folly of our ways. Vain and idle ſelf-deceivers, though thouſands fall around us, yet are we not awakened to the perception of our danger. Hardly are we brought to learn the vanity and precarioufneſs of every earthly good, till the fatal truth is taught us by our own late and unprofitable experience.

To what cauſe can we attribute this worſt of infatuations; this wilful neglect of thoſe duties we acknowledge to be our reaſonable ſervice; this blind perverſeneſs in not preparing for that hour of trial, which we know inevitably awaits us? It muſt undoubtedly be attributed to the habitual neglect of every ſerious ſubject, which, above all other vices, marks the character of the preſent age. It is becauſe we are ſo unalterably devoted to earthly objects, that we repel with terror every reflection which threatens to interrupt,

but

but for a moment, our enjoyment of them. When our minds, enervated by continual indulgence, are in torture if their repoſe ſuffer the moſt trifling interruption; when we ſtifle the firſt ſuggeſtions of our conſcience, as did the rebellious Iſraelites of old the admonitions of their Prophets, ſaying, *Propheſy not unto us right things, ſpeak unto us ſmooth things; propheſy deceits;* can we wonder that the awful truths of Divine Juſtice and Judgment to come, are baniſhed from our thoughts? And ſhall we expect that what we refuſe even to admit into our thoughts can have any influence on our lives?

Do we wiſh to eſtimate how deeply this vice, of indifference to every ſerious contemplation, is rooted in the hearts of thoſe of this age and nation? Let us reflect for a moment on the repeated warnings we have had, within a ſhort ſpace of time, that the vengeance of the Lord is ready to fall upon our heads; and aſk ourſelves what amendment his long-ſuffering and patience have produced

produced in our lives. Little more than two years have paſſed, ſince the providential diſcovery of deep-laid treaſon ſaved us from a blow, which in one night would have turned our City into a ſcene of unlimited devaſtation and ſlaughter. A civil war, which waſted widely our country, and threatened to deſtroy the ſyſtem of regular government which protects us, was ſcarcely terminated, when an invading enemy diſturbed the nation through its whole extent.—We were preſerved from its attack:—but were we thankful for our preſervation? let us look back and ſay, did any ſymptoms appear of a conviction that it was for our Crimes we were viſited? Did we become more religious or more virtuous?

What is our ſituation now? We have been threatened with famine:—we again are menaced by the ſame dreadful viſitation. The horrors of war are thickening around us; and He only, who guideth the ſtormy wind in its rage, can protect us from its devaſtation. Nay, more dreadful ſtill, we are hourly in danger

danger of that devouring peſtilence, which has made its way into Europe, a ſcourge more terrible than even war itſelf. The anger of the Lord, we may evidently perceive, is not yet turned away from us; his arm is ſtill ſtretched out ready to puniſh our iniquities: yet are we ſtill inſenſible to our danger; ſtill negligent of the only means on which we can rely for ſafety. We turn not from the evil of our way, neither do we ſeek unto the Lord our God; if haply He may yet be found of us.

But though thus inſenſible to national warnings, we are not yet ſo hardened as to be unmoved at the example of individual calamity. We awake with a momentary horror from our dream of ſecurity and pleaſure, when ſome ſignal inſtance of the uncertainty of human happineſs and human exiſtence is manifeſted to our view. If, when thus awakened, we ſeek not again the fatal apathy from which we were rouſed; if a ſenſe of our danger leads us to a *Repentance*

not to be repented of; then may we juſtly exclaim with the Pſalmiſt, *It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn thy ſtatutes.*

To ſuch a ſenſe may we be brought by the ſad event which we now mourn! and while thus ſeverely taught the inſtability of every earthly enjoyment, may we, liſtening to the admonitions of Divine Wiſdom, prepare againſt the day of our calamity, that ſupport which alone can ſuſtain us! even the hope in thee, O Lord! who art the Reſurrection and the Life; in whom whoſoever believeth ſhall never die.

But while we thus learn from the lamented fate of our departed brother, to ſet our thoughts upon a better world; let us learn from his life, how to make ourſelves uſeful and eſtimable in that which we are paſſing through. And to you, my younger Brethren, His example ſhould be peculiarly attractive. In Him, the deep reſearch of truth, purſued through

through all the intricate paths of the ſevereſt ſcience, had not diminiſhed aught from the native livelineſs of his mind.—Sent to this Seminary at an early age, he ſuffered not himſelf to be ſeduced from its duties by the impetuous ſallies of youthful vivacity. He ſought not in the company of the diſſipated and the profligate, *the laughter, in which the heart is ſorrowful;* but found in the purſuit of Academic honours, that occupation for his active mind, which at once gave employment to its various powers, and rewarded their exertions. He paſſed the dangerous period of his probationary ſtudies, with the brighteſt character for literary excellence; and what was ſtill more important, he paſſed it without reproach. No mention, but of his praiſe, is to be found in our Records;—no recollection, but of his innocence, exiſts in our memories.

In that purſuit to which He next devoted himſelf, the diſcouragements he met with ſerved but to increaſe his ardour, and to con-

firm his diligence. Though for a time longer than ever has been remembered, he had no opportunity to try his ſtrength as a candidate for a Fellowſhip, yet he perſevered with a ſteadineſs, which even in the cold and phlegmatic would appear aſtoniſhing. Nor did the unſucceſsful event of his firſt attempt, though few would have borne it, under ſuch circumſtances, with patience, abate his ardour.—He purſued his object:—He ſucceeded.

He was now ſurrounded by friends, who admired and who loved him.—His company and his acquaintance were ſought by all.—He poſſeſſed talents calculated to divert his attention from the ſevere purſuits of literature; and his long confinement to laborious ſtudy, might naturally have been expected to produce at leaſt a temporary relaxation of his diligence. But far different was the event.—Though he retired not from the ſociety of his friends—though he fled not from the world—though the fame of his talents brought to him for inſtruction a greater multitude of pupils, than had ever been

been under the care of one man, to ſuper-intend and to inſtruct whom muſt have occupied a large portion of his time;—yet ſtill his purſuit of literature was unceaſing.

Early zealous in the acquirement of ſacred knowledge, he was active in forming a ſociety for the ſtudy of the ancient Fathers of the Church; in whoſe writings he ſought to diſcover the opinions, which had prevailed in the earlieſt and pureſt ages of Chriſtianity, and to trace the origin of thoſe fatal hereſies, by which its genuine ſimplicity had been corrupted. Nor did this ſuffice to ſatisfy his boundleſs activity. He was a principal promoter of that literary Aſſociation for the purſuit of Science, from which the long-wiſhed for inſtitution in this kingdom, of a Public Society for the Advancement of Knowledge, took its riſe. Even his fondneſs for an art, which too frequently leads its votaries far from philoſophic purſuits, became with him an inducement to ſevere ſtudy:—and the firſt production he ventured to lay before the public,

public, took its riſe from his ſucceſsful endeavours in developing a difficult part of the theory of harmony. Yet though thus variouſly employed, he found time to make himſelf acquainted with the moſt celebrated languages of modern Europe; and even attained to a conſiderable proficiency in that of his native country, though of difficult acquirement, and little countenanced by faſhion:— and to his knowledge of her language, Ireland owes the eſtabliſhment of her claim to an early acquaintance with the elegancies of poetic compoſition.

Nor ſhould I here paſs unnoticed the ineſtimable advantages this ſociety received, from the application of his penetrating genius to the interpretation of its ſtatutes. Ardently attached to the intereſts of the Univerſity, his conduct in all her public concerns had been influenced ſolely by his wiſh to promote them: and it is well known that his private advantage could not influence his actions; and that he would not have refuſed to riſk his own eſtabliſhment

eſtabliſhment in life, rather than forſake his principles. He lived to ſee the accompliſhment of his wiſhes—to ſee the rule of well-ordered laws ſucceed to the capricious interdict of arbitrary will; and the rewards of patient labours and diſtinguiſhed talents, no longer dependent on the deciſion of an individual.—He lived alſo to ſee the venerable inſtructor of his youth elevated to the merited ſtation, of being the head of this Seminary;—and when he, full of age and full of honour, had been called to receive his reward;—He had the ſatisfaction to behold that the wiſe and beneficent care, which had been diſplayed in that illuſtrious appointment, did not ceaſe to watch over its intereſts.

But two years ſince, he was raiſed to the higheſt honour which could be beſtowed upon him—that he ſhould be one of the Shepherds over the flock of Chriſt.

And never be it forgotten that this great elevation, accompanied as it was by circumſtances,

ſtances, the moſt flattering to human vanity, wrought no change in that natural ſimplicity of manners, which was ſo diſtinguiſhing an excellence of his amiable character. Nor ſmall is the praiſe which ſuch unaffected ſimplicity deſerves; and few indeed are they who attain to it.

But too ſoon were virtues more auſtere called into action.—Too ſoon were patience, and reſignation, and ſubmiſſion to the ſevereſt afflictions, which ſuffering humanity is expoſed to, ſummoned to ſuſtain the attack of cruel and loathſome diſeaſe.—Under this dreadful viſitation, how wonderful were the reſources of his active mind!

The labours of ten years public inſtruction were reviſed, improved, corrected, condenſed, publiſhed.——The diſtemper, mean while, rapidly encreaſed.——Social converſe might be heard; but alas! it could no longer be replied to.—The word, with difficulty uttered, could but imperfectly be underſtood; and

and the rapid idea, for which the quickeſt articulation had been too ſlow, was tardily communicated by the pen.

Yet ſtill the Mind remained unſubdued.—The plan of giving a new verſion of the pious effuſions of the Royal Pſalmiſt, was vigorouſly proſecuted.—A language with which he had been entirely unacquainted, was rapidly learned, to aſſiſt in developing the difficulties of the Hebrew original.—And to diverſify this laborious employment, the numerous writings of the enemies of the Chriſtian faith were peruſed, with cloſe and ſubtle inveſtigation; and a collection made from them of examples, by which the various forms of ſophiſtry, might be illuſtrated and expoſed.—And to add to theſe multiplied labours, each of which alone would have ſufficed to employ an ordinary mind, under all the advantages which health and eaſe could beſtow, he was engaged in a deep examination, of the difficulties attendant on a new demonſtration of the Being and Attributes of the Deity.

In the pious labours of that important inquiry, he ſpent the laſt painful hours of his life.—But a few weeks before he quitted this mortal ſcene, he diſcuſſed the ſubtle principles on which his argument was founded, with all the vigour of an intellect unimpaired; while with the ſame pen he bade adieu to the reſpected correſpondent to whom he wrote, in ſuch terms as ſhewed that he knew he ſhould ſee him no more.

Shall not an example ſuch as this rouſe to emulation, thoſe who witneſſed its excellence? Shall not the afflictions, which contributed to manifeſt that excellence, teach us a true eſtimate of the ſtate of being, to which we are now called by the will of our Creator? —If we profit not by inſtruction ſo forcibly impreſſed, how ſhall we eſcape the condemnation of our folly?

Do we wiſh to live beloved, and honoured? Let us imitate the uſeful labours and untainted innocence of that life, which we have been employed in contemplating. Do we wiſh to meet

meet death in its moſt dreadful form with patient reſignation? Let us impreſs our minds deeply with that love of divine truth, which we have ſeen was able to give ſupport to the moſt melancholy and painful hours of its cloſe.

But let us not expect that thoſe advantages can be obtained without an effort. Think not that in liſtening to the words of inſtruction which you have now heard, you have fulfilled all the duty which is required of you; nor ſeek to baniſh ſuddenly thoſe melancholy reflections, which have taken poſſeſſion of your minds.—Attend, O man! while it is yet called to day, unto the things which belong to thy peace; for thou knoweſt not what to-morrow ſhall bring.—What thine hand findeth to do in the work of thy ſalvation, do it with all thy might: for there is no work, nor knowledge, nor wiſdom in the Grave whither thou goeſt.

ON reviewing the preceding pages, I find ſome circumſtances in the life of my ever to be regretted friend, alluded to in ſuch a manner as may require farther elucidation. Addreſſing a congregation in which he was well known, I thought a detailed account unneceſſary; nor had I time for more than a rapid ſketch of the leading circumſtances which marked his character. I knew not the fatal event, till the Friday before I preached. I therefore throw together a few facts, which may ſerve as illuſtrations of what I have not expreſſed with ſufficient clearneſs.

MATTHEW YOUNG, the ſon of a Gentleman of moderate, but independent fortune in the county of Roſcommon, was admitted a Penſioner into Trinity College, Dublin, on the Eighth of July 1766, under the care of Mr. Uſsher; ſince known as the firſt Profeſſor of Practical Aſtronomy, on the foundation of Provoſt Andrews. Mr. Uſsher ſoon after went to England, and his pupils became the care of Dr. Murray. The talents and ingenuous viva-

city of Young won the affections of that amiable and excellent man, who to the lateſt period of his life continued to regard him with parental attachment. In 1771, Mr. Young was of a ſtanding at which he might have offered himſelf as a candidate for a fellowſhip; but by an unprecedented fatality no vacancy happened till 1774. He then ſuſtained the painful trial of the probationary examination with great applauſe, and the majority of the ſenior fellows gave him their votes; but one of his competitors, Mr. Day, who had the ſuffrages of the remainder, was nominated by the Provoſt. In 1775, he was again a candidate and unanimouſly elected, only two opponents venturing to appear againſt him.

In 1779, a ſociety was formed in the College, for the purpoſe of ſtudying the Ancient Fathers; and about three years afterwards, another for the purſuit of ſcientific inquiries. Of both Mr. Young, who had been chiefly active in their eſtabliſhment, was a diligent member; and continued his attendance till the latter, on the incorporation of the Royal Iriſh Academy, in 1786, ceaſed to meet; and the former, ſome of its members having deſerted, and the moſt intereſting ſubjects of inquiry being exhauſted, was gradually diſſolved. He had married early, and ſoon had a numerous family; but the vulgar error that celibacy is the ſtate moſt favourable to literary diligence, an error founded in groſs ignorance of human nature as well as of fact, found no ſupport from any conſequent diminution of his zeal in the

the purſuit of knowledge. In 1781, he was appointed one of the aſſiſtants to the Profeſſor of Mathematics, and in 1784, he publiſhed his Eſſay on Sounds and Muſical Strings, in which he gave a ſatisfactory defence of the 47. 2. lib. Princip. overturned the arguments for the rectilineal motion of ſound which had been derived from the phænomena of echoes, and ſhewed thoſe phænomena to be perfectly conſiſtent with the Newtonian Theory; and explained ſome difficulties in the theory of the vibrations of Muſical Strings, by a number of curious and deciſive experiments. This valuable production opened the way to his election into the Profeſſorſhip of Natural Philoſophy, which took place on the reſignation of Dr. Wilſon, in 1786.

He now devoted himſelf diligently to his duty as a Public Lecturer, and his ſucceſs fully anſwered the expectations which had been formed at his appointment. How highly he merited the eſteem in which he was held in his own ſociety, the public are enabled to judge by the admirable Analyſis of his Lectures, which happily he lived to publiſh.

He had early formed the plan of a Comment on the Principia, the firſt book of which he completed and might long ſince have publiſhed; but he thought it too expenſive an undertaking to engage in, at a time when the public mind was ſo much occupied by political diſſenſions, that a work of abſtract ſcience had little chance of attracting attention. His deſire of attaining perfection might alſo have contributed to this delay, for he continued to the laſt to

make

make occaſional improvements; and at a late period of his deplorable illneſs, he was employed on the method of calculating the Anomaly which is given by Hennert, and detected a material error which had been committed by that laborious Mathematician.

Whilſt thus actively engaged in literary purſuits, his attention was often interrupted by the ſhare he took in the public concerns of the Univerſity. Thoſe diſſenſions which long diſturbed its tranquillity, it is not now neceſſary particularly to explain: they have long ceaſed to exiſt, nor can any apprehenſions be entertained that they will ever again recur. Suffice it to ſay that integrity and ſteadineſs uniformly marked his conduct during their continuance. One circumſtance however it may be neceſſary to explain. The charter of Dublin College, veſts the government of the ſociety in the Provoſt and the ſeven Senior Fellows, and gives to them alſo the power of electing the Fellows; but the Provoſts had long claimed, under a miſconſtruction of ſome of the ſtatutes, a *veto* on every proceeding; and, in elections, an *affirmative* power; the Provoſt's vote alone determining the appointment, whatever might be the opinion of the other electors. About the year 1790, the legality of theſe claims began to be queſtioned; and an argument, equally ingenious and convincing, in which the real meaning of the Statutes was explained, and the claim of the Provoſts proved to have been founded in error, was on that occaſion printed by Doctor Young, (he had taken the degree of D. D. in 1786) and

and that thoſe claims were brought forward for judicial deciſion, will always be gratefully attributed to his talents and exertions.

He was alſo during the whole of this period an active member of the Royal Iriſh Academy. How much he contributed to the ſupport of that inſtitution will appear from the liſt of his papers which are publiſhed in its Tranſactions*.

Thus diſtinguiſhed for talents and learning, amiable in his manners and unſpotted in his life, he found in the Marquis Cornwallis a Patron ſuch as he merited; and on the vacancy of the See of Clonfert, the firſt which occurred after that Nobleman's appointment to the government of Ireland, he was, without any ſolicitation, promoted to it.

* A Synthetical Demonſtration of the Rule for the Quadrature of Simple Curves, per Æquationes terminorum numero infinitas.

Ancient Gaelic Poems reſpecting the race of the Fians, collected in the Highlands of Scotland in the year 1784.

An Inquiry into the different Modes of Demonſtration by which the Velocity of ſpouting Fluids has been inveſtigated *a priori*.

The Origin and Theory of the Gothic Arch.

A Demonſtration of Newton's Theorem for the Correction of Spherical Errors in the Object Glaſſes of teleſcopes.

On the Preceſſion of the Equinoxes.

Remarks on the Velocity with which Fluids iſſue from apertures in veſſels which contain them.

On the Force of Teſtimony in eſtabliſhing Facts contrary to Analogy.

On the Number of Primitive Colorific Rays in Solar Light.

His

His conſecration took place on the 3d. of February, 1799, and nearly at the ſame moment, the dreadful malady which terminated ſo fatally made its appearance. At firſt only a ſmall ulcer on the tongue, it occaſioned little alarm; but the duty to which he was called, at the primary viſitation of his dioceſe, of giving a public exhortation to his Clergy, produced ſuch an aggravation of the complaint as gave ſerious cauſe for apprehenſion. Its horrid progreſs was thenceforward continual. His utterance became painful and gradually inarticulate. The diſorder ſpread to the throat. To the dreadful pain attendant on Cancer, was added the torture ariſing from the application of the violent remedies which were judged neceſſary. Hopeleſs of relief from regular practitioners, he went to ſeek it at Whitworth in Lancaſhire; and there after near five months of extreme ſuffering, he expired on the 28th of November, in the fiftieth year of his age.

It will hardly be credited, that during the rapid progreſs of this deplorable malady, he drew up from his Lectures his Analyſis of the Principles of Natural Philoſophy, and ſuperintended the publication with an accuracy and correctneſs ſcarcely to be equalled—laboured in the improvement of his comment on the firſt Book of Newton's Principia—wrote an Eſſay on Sophiſms, collecting examples of the various ſpecies from the Deiſtical writers, and thus ſerving at once the cauſe of Science and of Religion—made himſelf acquainted with the Syriac language; and completed a tranſlation of the Pſalms, of which before

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his illneſs he had done little more than ſketch out the plan:—and drew up a Demonſtration *a priori* of the Exiſtence and Attributes of the Deity. Theſe laſt two works occupied his attention as long as he could hold a pen, and were the ſubject of his correſpondence till within a very few weeks of his death. The Axioms which he aſſumed as the foundation of his Proof of the Exiſtence of a GOD, are diſcuſſed by him in a letter to the Provoſt, dated the tenth of laſt October!

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